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Winner

Spring 2013 James Slevin Assignment Sequence Prize

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Assignment sequences in a writing course are built around a series of essay topics. These sequences probably represent work assigned during a portion of the course rather than all of the essay assignments distributed over an entire semester. Submissions should include a rationale and a description of your plans for eliciting and responding to student drafts and revisions, as well as a description of how you prepare students for each essay assignment, for example by engaging them in preparatory writing exercises, including informal writing designed to help students understand the material on which they subsequently write formal essays. Reflections on what worked well, and why, and what you would change another time, are welcome.

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Submissions are due in 101 McGraw Hall by Friday, May 17. No exceptions can be made.

Spring 2013 James F. Slevin Assignment Sequence Prize Application

~Please Print Clearly. Do not staple. Use paper clips only.~

Instructor's name Bernadette Guthrie

Department ENGL Course # and title 1111-103 "Metamorphosis: Identity + Change"

Should I win a prize, I give the John S. Knight Institute permission to publish, quote from, and/or distribute copies of the assignment sequence, and to distribute publicity to newspapers and other publications, local and/or national, about my winning the prize. I also grant the Knight Institute permission to deposit the assignment sequence in a web accessible archive and make it available under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial license. I am prepared to send electronic versions of my text to Donna O'Hara (dlo1@cornell.edu) in the Knight Institute. I understand that I will receive the award for my prize-winning sequence upon submission of the electronic text.

(Re)Writing the Self
Title of Assignment Sequence

Instructor's signature

Bernadette Guthrie

Date 05/17/2013

Application for the James Slevin Assignment Sequence Prize

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I. Rationale:

I originally developed my FWS “Metamorphosis: Identity and Change” because I wanted to create a course that was rigorous and theoretically focused but which would also be relatable to students and their daily lives.

By focusing on the question of the nature of identity, I was able to incorporate a diverse range of literary and critical texts while allowing students opportunities to grapple with relatively abstract concepts through the application of those concepts to their own experiences.

The assignment sequence represented here played an important role in facilitating that crossing from the abstract to the concrete. At the very beginning of the course, I asked my students to write a brief essay that represented an inversion of the typical college admissions essay. If the standard admissions essay asks students to draw on some life experience as an illustration of who they “really are,” I wanted to unsettle easy assumptions about the nature of identity by having students focus on moments in which they felt like they “weren’t themselves.”

The next two essay assignments represented in this sequence—“Performing Self” and “Performing Other”—encouraged students to explore the concepts of “self” and “other,” which they had first encountered through their personal essay, through a detailed engagement with critics in the course and with literary and filmic texts. “Performing Self” helped ensure that students understood and could accurately represent Judith Butler’s difficult but important concept of “performativity.” “Performing Other” did not tether students as closely to a critic but allowed them to more fully articulate their own understanding of identity and performance.

The final essay in this sequence—and in my course—returns to the personal mode of the original essay but also asks students to integrate the knowledge they’ve gained through writing more traditional analytic essays in the middle of the course. Students are asked to answer the deceptively simple question “Who are you?” by integrating their own experiences and their responses to course texts into an articulation of their own understanding of the nature of identity. In this way, the course is meant to come full circle in a way that allows students to synthesize the diverse material of the course and to reflect on how their own self-understanding has been affected by the process of inquiry we’ve pursued throughout the year.

Essay 1, which served a diagnostic purpose, was turned in without peer review. Preparation for Essays 2 and 3 included pre-writing, small group meetings with me, and peer review. Essay 4 included pre-writing, small group meetings with me, and the option to receive feedback from me on the rough draft. Students were encouraged to revise papers between their initial “final draft” and the compiling of their final portfolio for the course.

II-1 Assignment 1 Prompt:

“How am I not myself?”

Length: 2-3 pages

Due on Google Drive before 10pm on Friday, January 25th

Most students have been asked, at some point in their academic career, to write an essay about “who they are.” You may have written such an essay quite recently as part of the college admissions process. For this assignment, you’re going to be doing something a little bit different. Instead of writing about a moment that defined you or a story that you find to be central to your identity, you’ll write about a moment in your life that seemed “out of character” or an anecdote that involves a time when you “weren’t really yourself.”

In this course, we’ll be talking a good deal about whether or not these “out of character” moments are, in fact, central to our identity. While we’ll be reading plenty of critical arguments about this question over the course of the semester, I want to begin by getting your take on how we might formulate various responses to this question.

In order to engage with this question, this essay will have three parts:

- (1) Relate your “out of character” story.
- (2) Make an argument for why this story does not reveal something about who you “really are.”
- (3) Make an argument for why and how this story reveals something about your identity.

You may treat these three sections separately (i.e., you may simply divide the paper into a “story” section and two discrete “argument” sections) or you may craft this into a more traditional essay that synthesizes these three arguments into a single, formal essay.

Learning Outcomes

This essay will:

- *Give you practice formulating and supporting arguments.*
- *Encourage you to think critically about your own personal experience.*
- *Introduce you to one of the motivating questions of the course.*

II-2 Assignment 1 Preparatory Materials:

1. Class Discussion. On the first day of class, we look at two simple metamorphosis narratives: Otis Redding's "I'm a Changed Man" and a plot summary of Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*. As a class, we identify the "original" and "changed" states that the protagonist inhabits and propose arguments about which state represents the "true self." The discussion quickly begins to demonstrate the difficulty in determining what constitutes the "true self," especially when someone's identity has changed.

2. Reading Worksheet for "The Ugly Duckling" and Jonathan Culler's "Identity, Identification, and the Subject" [see appendix of "Course Materials"]. The reading worksheet prepares students to write the first essay by asking them to begin to reflect on their personal experience in relationship to the questions posed by the course. In formulating an argument for whether they "chose" to come to Cornell or not, students reflect on questions of agency and identity that are also integral to Essay 1.

III-1 Assignment 2 Prompt:

“Performing Self”

2 Hard Copies of 3-4 Page Rough Draft due in Class on Friday, March 15th

Final Draft of 4-5 Pages due on Google Drive by 10pm on Wednesday, March 27th

For this paper, choose any two of the three texts that we’ve considered in this section (*Orlando*, *M. Butterfly*, or *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*). **Use these two texts—and Judith Butler’s “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”—to make an argument about the nature of identity.** There are a few questions you’ll need to answer before you begin writing in order to effectively construct your argument:

- What’s the relationship of the two texts you’ll be using? Do they represent contrasting modes of identity performance or do they essentially complement one another?
- What is your position on the nature of identity in relationship to Judith Butler’s? Do you agree with her? Disagree with her? Or agree with her in part? Will she be a “friend” or a “foe” in your argument?
- What passages or scenes from each text will be most useful to you in making your argument? Are there passages or scenes from the two texts that could be productively read with one another?

Once you’ve answered these basic questions, you can start to develop a three-story thesis that not only notes patterns in the texts but also makes a larger argument about the meaning and importance of those patterns. Make sure to support your argument by close readings of passages and scenes, engagement with Butler, and through identifying and responding to potential counterarguments.

III-2 Assignment 2 Preparatory Materials:

1. Reading Worksheet for Judith Butler’s “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” [see appendix of course materials].

This reading worksheet aims both to help students get a grasp on Butler’s complex theory of gender performativity and to think about the question of writerly *ethos* in relationship to identity politics.

2. In-Class Debate. To help develop better close reading skills and to encourage students to think about the constructivist/essentialist divide, a debate—taking up the entirety of one class period—was staged. Students were arbitrarily divided into two teams and each team was given a broad statement to defend. Team A was asked to defend the position that “Art, artifice, society, and self-construction are what’s really important in life” and Team B was asked to defend the position that “Nature, our essential selves, and the eternal truths of existence are what’s really important in life.” All evidence for the argument had to come via close readings of Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando*. In each round, both teams were allowed to perform a close reading of a passage that they believed supported their argument. The opposing team was allowed to rebut this argument by proposing an alternative reading of the passage.

3. Visual Analysis Exercise. In class, students were re-shown the final scene from David Cronenberg’s *M Butterfly* and were asked to write a description solely of what was *visually* happening in the scene. The exercise was designed to help students attend to visual texts for elements beyond plot and dialogue.

4. Pre-Writing Worksheet for Essay 2 [see appendix of course materials]. In preparation for small group meetings with me, students were asked to complete a “pre-writing” worksheet that asked them, among other things, to explain why their argument mattered. The point of this exercise was to help students clearly understand—and clearly articulate within their papers—the stakes of their argument.

5. In-class peer review. Students spent one class period providing feedback on two of their peers’ rough drafts.

IV-1 Assignment 3 Prompt:

Performing Identity

Length: 6-7 Pages

Due Dates:

- Rough draft of at least 5 pages due by 10pm on Google Drive (shared w/ peer reviewers) on **Friday, April 12th**.
- Response to peers' drafts due on Google Drive by 10pm on **Monday, April 15th**.
- Final Draft due on Google Drive by 10pm on Wednesday, **April 17th**.

We “perform” everyday as students, family members, employees, and members of groups. Judith Butler has argued that we also perform our gender—and some argue that her model could be extended to race and ethnicity. However, in all these cases, we are performing ourselves (or what we believe ourselves to be). In the most recent section of the course, in contrast, we’ve been thinking about what it means to “perform” or “be” somebody else, somebody that we recognize as “other.” **What’s the relationship between our performance of self¹ and these performances of the “other”?**

In answering this question, you should do the following:

- Use one primary text from this section of the course (*Black Like Me*, *Persona*, or *Being John Malkovich*) and one primary text from the previous section (*Orlando*, *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*, or *M Butterfly*). Incorporate close readings (or viewings) of both texts into your argument.
- Engage with the theoretical questions we’ve talked about in the course, *regardless of whether you explicitly cite a critic*.
- Make sure to include an introduction that “hooks” your reader and explains why your argument matters. Additionally, be sure to include a substantive, three-story thesis that sets up a complex and nuanced argument.
- Be sure to include proper in-text MLA citations *and* a separate Works Cited page!

¹ You don’t have to go with Butler’s definition here. You may well believe that there is an essential self that is expressed (or performed) through our actions. However, you should make clear in your essay what *you* mean by “performing self.”

IV-2 Assignment 3 Preparatory Materials:

1. Viewing Worksheet for *Persona* [see appendix of course materials]. The viewing worksheet for *Persona* aims to provide students with guidance through this difficult film. In addition to providing tips on how to approach the film, the viewing worksheet encouraged students to draw connections between the film and the critical ideas introduced in the course and asked students to engage in some brief visual analysis.

2. Reading Response for *Being John Malkovich*. For homework, students were asked to compose a response to the following prompt: “Choose a *single scene* from *Being John Malkovich*. Make an argument about identity through a 1-2 page close reading of that scene. Be certain to attend not only to the dialogue but also to the framing of shots, the inclusion of visual elements, the use of sound, etc.” The assignment allowed students to practice, in a sustained manner, a close reading of a visual text and, in many cases, produced writing that could be incorporated directly into their essays. The reading responses served as the basis for one day of our two-day discussion of the film; I also provided written feedback to each student on their reading responses.

3. Pre-Writing Worksheet for Essay 3 [see appendix of course materials]. Students were asked to complete the pre-writing worksheet before meeting with me in small groups. The worksheet focuses, in part, on one issue that students had been struggling with: writing compelling introductory paragraphs. Students were asked to produce a draft of their intro paragraph as part of the worksheet. In the small group meetings, each student read their paragraph aloud and each member of the group, in turn, provided one piece of feedback on the paragraph.

4. Online peer editing via Google Docs. Students were split into groups of four. Each group shared their rough drafts as Google Docs and used the Google Docs interface to provide feedback to one another. Utilizing Google Docs (instead of MS Word) allowed the peer editors to see each other’s comments, which reduced repetition and encouraged collaboration among editors.

V-1 Assignment 4 Prompt:**Who are you?****Length: 6-7 Pages****Due Dates:**

- **Optional Rough Draft of at least 5 full pages due by 10pm on Friday, May 3rd on Google Drive**
- **Final Draft due in Final Portfolio on Friday, May 17th by 10pm on Google Drive**

At the beginning of this course, you were asked to write a paper describing a moment in which you “weren’t yourself.” Now, at the conclusion of the course, I want you to think about who you *are*. While this paper is personal in its content, it should still make a clear and complex argument. You should not simply *explain* who you are, you should make an argument—replete with evidence both from personal experience and from the course—about *who* you are.

Ultimately, the paper should be as much an argument about *what* the self is as it is an argument about who you, in particular, are. To effectively present an argument about who you are, you will first have to think through the major questions we’ve entertained in the course: (1) Were you born who you are or did you “become” who you are? (2) Is your identity innate to you or is it the result of social constructions and performances? (3) Are you the same person now that you were in the past or have you fundamentally changed? (4) How central to your identity is your gender/sex, your race, your sexual orientation, your religious identity (or lack thereof), or your participation in other identity categories? (5) Is the reader of your paper—whoever that might be—really equipped to understand who you are? Are there limits to language’s ability to express or “carry” the self?

The paper offers you a lot of freedom in making your argument, but there are a few general guidelines:

- Your paper must *substantively* engage with *at least* three course texts. These could be critical texts, literary or filmic texts, or a mixture of these types. You should not attempt to grapple with *more than* six texts.
- Your paper must include a complex, arguable thesis. Your paper should identify and respond to at least two strong counterarguments.
- You should incorporate—and engage with—direct quotes from course texts. These quotes should be properly cited in-text using either MLA or Chicago Style. Be certain to include a separate Works Cited page at the end of the your paper.

V-2 Assignment 4 Preparatory Materials:

1. Epitaph Search in Response to Wordsworth’s “Essay upon Epitaphs.” As part of this section of the course, students read portions of one of William Wordsworth’s “Essays Upon Epitaphs.” The nature of the epitaph poses a question central to Essay 4: What does it mean to represent yourself—or to be represented—in writing?

In preparation for our discussion, I asked students to peruse the Farber Gravestone Collection—a photo database available through the library website—and to select an epitaph to share with the class. They were asked to come prepared to discuss whether their epitaph met or departed from Wordsworth’s criteria for a good epitaph.

2. Creative Response to Derrida Interview. As part of their reading for this section of the course, students were asked to read a few pages of the last interview that French philosopher Jacques Derrida granted before his death. In the interview, Derrida talks about his fundamental inability to control the legacy of his writing. As a response to this reading, students were asked to consider their own authorial relationship to their writing and to their audience by answering the following prompt: “Imagine that, in the year 2112, your dorm is set to be demolished to make room for a new hover-car parking lot. A curious construction worker decides to take one last walk through the building before it’s reduced to rubble. While strolling, he comes upon a yellowed and crumpled, but nonetheless completely legible, copy of your final draft of Essay 3. [The essay that students had just completed.] In a short (1-2 page) response, answer two questions: (1) *How will the effect of the essay on this future reader be different than its effect on one of your friends (not enrolled in this course)?* (2) *Will the future construction worker form some image or concept of you from your writing? If so, what would it be?* Include at least one quote from the Derrida reading.

3. Course Metamorphosis. For the final day of class, I asked students to write a brief response in which they explained how they would change the course if they taught it. There were a few guidelines—essentially the Knight Institute guidelines for an FWS—but the students had relative freedom. The exercise encouraged students to think back over the course texts they’d encountered and to assess their relationship to those texts and to the presentation of them in the course. This helped students begin to engage in the type of “whole course” thinking that the essay assignment also asks them to undertake.

4. Pre-Writing Worksheet for Essay 4 [see appendix of course materials]. Essay 4 is, fundamentally, an argument about definition. Thus, in the pre-writing worksheet for Essay 4 that students completed before meeting in small groups with me, I asked them—among other things—to provide a definition of the “self” and to locate evidence that they could use to defend this definition.

VI. Reflections on the Implementation of the Assignment Sequence

While I was very happy overall with the implementation of this assignment sequence, there are a few elements that I would change if I were to use the sequence again. First, the prompts for Assignment 2 and Assignment 3 are very similar and students ended up largely repeating arguments over the course of the two essays. Thus, I would rewrite Assignment 3 to more starkly differentiate it from the preceding essay and to provide students with more guidance on how to move into new territory with their argument. I also realized, by the end of the course, that while I had focused a good deal on the honing of introductions, I had spent very little time on conclusions and had not developed any specific writing exercise geared to the topic. Therefore, I would—a second time around—incorporate activities that specifically addressed this issue.

In spite of these issues, I found that overall the assignment sequence's basic structure of one personal essay followed by two purely academic essays followed by a more personal (but still academic) essay worked well. The first essay helped students become personally invested in the course and the next two assignments increased their critical thinking and close reading skills. The final assignment allowed students to utilize those skills to clarify their own stakes in the questions of the course. While a few students were apprehensive about the final paper, most expressed great excitement at the prospect of an essay that allowed them to speak in a personal voice while still engaging with course texts.

VII. Appendix of Course Materials

Materials related to Essay 1:

1. Reading Worksheet for “The Ugly Duckling” and “Identity, Identification, and the Subject”

Reading Worksheet for “Identity, Change, and Choice”

Jonathan Culler, “Identity, Identification, and the Subject”

(n.b. Culler gives quick takes of the ideas of lots of different theorists in this chapter. Don’t get hung up trying to “get” all of these—oftentimes he is referencing earlier sections of the book that have more detailed explanations. Focus on trying to get the “big picture.”)

Two quick definitions of terms that Culler will use throughout this chapter:

Agency: the ability of a subject to take action in a particular situation. For instance, one could argue that in creating this handout I have been able to exercise more agency than you have. I have (theoretically) had the power to write whatever questions I want on this handout, whereas your responses are constrained precisely because they are responses: your writing on this handout will be conditioned and contained by the format of the handout itself, by the fact that you will be providing answers to questions that you did not pose.²

Discourse: the way in which a particular institution or field of study talks about and frames the world and the people in it. For example, imagine a man who has stolen boxes of pens from a string of office supply stores. A psychological discourse might position this man as a “kleptomaniac,” a legal discourse might treat him as a “repeat offender,” and a religious discourse might say that he is someone who has “committed a sin.” Of course, discourses can interact: a judge or a priest might determine that the man carries less legal or moral responsibility for his actions because he was a “kleptomaniac.” Nonetheless, the central status of the man differs from discourse to discourse.

Questions to bear in mind while reading:

- Culler suggests that our identity is partially shaped by the narratives we read and watch: “Poems and novels address us in ways that demand identification, and identification works to create identity: we become who we are by identifying with figures we read about” (155). Do you believe that your own identity has been constructed by your identification with fictional or historical figures whose stories you know? Why or why not?
- Do you think that popular American culture tends to think of the “I” in traditional terms as “something inner and unique, something prior to the acts that it performs” or does it think of the “I” more as a “decentered” subject whose “possibilities of thought and action are determined by a series of systems which the subject does not control or even understand” (150)?

² This is a very reductive account of the more complicated nature of agency in this situation. For instance, one could point out that I wrote this handout in response to Culler’s chapter and within the institutional environment of Cornell and the English department and their expectations regarding how and what I teach. One could also note that you have the option to refuse to complete the handout, to ignore my questions and write answers to your own, to drop the course, etc. However, all of these alternate possibilities have clear consequences that would, themselves, be a check on the extent of your agency. We could further follow out these strands of thought, but I think you get the idea . . . agency (and our relative possession of it) is complicated even in the simplest of situations!

- Think back about how you came to Cornell. What role did your own choices and inherent characteristics play in bringing you here? To what degree did circumstances beyond your control bring you here? What were these circumstances? Is it fair to say that you “chose” to come to Cornell? Why or why not?
- Did you find Culler’s writing style to be clear? Engaging? How would you describe his style? Why do you think he chose to write in this style?

Questions to prepare for our class discussion:

Culler lists (especially on pages 151 and 159) a number of questions that theories about subjectivity and identification pose. Choose one of these questions that you’d like to explore and briefly explain why you’re interested in it:

Reflect back on the questions grouped under (3) in “Questions to Bear in Mind While Reading” (see other side). Is it fair to say that you “chose” to come to Cornell? Why or why not?

Is Hans Christian Anderson’s “The Ugly Duckling” a story about becoming something different than what you originally were or is it about “becoming” what you already were? Explain your reasoning.

Materials Related to Essay 2:*1. Reading Worksheet for Judith Butler's "Imitation and Gender Insubordination":***Reading Worksheet for Judith Butler — "Imitation and Gender Insubordination"**

Background: Butler wrote this article in response to critiques of her influential book *Gender Trouble* in which she argued that gender was something we "perform" rather than something we naturally possess. In Butler's account, we are all performing a sort of "drag" regardless of our biological sex. The section you were assigned was specifically written in response to critics who argued that destabilizing gender and sexual identities would necessarily hamper "identity" driven political fights for women's rights and gay rights.

One section may require a bit of explanation. On page 124, Butler speaks about going to a Yale conference on homosexuality and jokingly remarks that she was "going off to Yale to be a lesbian." Butler's point is that whenever we represent ourselves (and particularly when we represent ourselves by identity categories in political and academic settings) we end up "performing" the thing that we, presumably, already were. Butler's ultimate argument is that it is these repeated performances of our identity (in language, in behavior, etc.) that create the very identity categories that we think we are merely representing. But precisely because these identities only come into being *through their repetition*, the repetition is "anxious" since each "redoubling" of our performance reminds us that our identities are, in fact, not secured but must be constantly reiterated.

Questions to bear in mind while reading:

- What role does Butler's personal experience—and her own identity—play in her presentation of her theory?
- How, in Butler's account, does the repetition of the "I," the re-presentation of the self day in and day out, both establish this "I" and establish "the instability of the very category" that it creates? (125)
- How, according to Butler, is the concept of "origin" in fact produced by that origin's supposed "copies"?
-

Questions to prepare for class:

Construct a sentence using the following formula: "As a [insert an identity category that you belong to (e.g., man, undergraduate, Latina, etc., etc.)], I think that [insert a statement that somehow relates to this identity category]." (Example: "As a graduate student in English, I think that the humanities are undervalued in higher education.")

Your sentence:

How would this sentence "work" differently if you eliminated the opening clause? In other words, what is happening rhetorically at the moment that you tie an identity claim to an argumentative one?

2. Pre-writing Worksheet for Essay 2

Propose a tentative thesis for your paper based on the three-story thesis model.

Explain in a short paragraph why your argument matters. In other words, why should someone want to read your paper? What is it doing that's interesting, provocative, or useful?

When you think about writing Essay 3, what are you most concerned about being able to do? What are you most confident that you'll be able to do?

Materials related to Essay 3

1. Persona viewing worksheet:

Persona was released in 1966 and was directed by acclaimed Swedish filmmaker Ingmar Bergman. His most famous film is *The Seventh Seal* (1957), though *Persona* is often regarded as his masterwork. His films explore difficult philosophical questions: Who are we? Why are we here? Is there a purpose to our existence? The answers, insofar as his films provide them, do not tend to be easy.

Chances are that you haven't seen a film quite like *Persona* before. Indeed, if you are generally accustomed to watching popular US films, it may take some getting used to. Here are a couple of pointers about watching this type of film:

- *Plot is secondary to character.* The plot (what plot there is) is not ultimately the point of *Persona*, what matters is the development of the two main characters. Pay attention to them.
- *Pay attention to your own reactions.* Parts of *Persona* are more about producing emotional effects than about simply presenting you with something to think about. Pay attention to your own emotional responses throughout the film. If there are moments when you're confused by the film, pay attention to the confusion. What is Bergman trying to accomplish by producing these effects in the viewer?
- *Pay attention to the visuals.* Bergman originally planned to title the film *A Bit of Cinematography*—and cinematography is indeed central to film. What shots or images do you find to be most striking? Why are they so striking? What purpose do they serve? Refer to a "Short Guide to Writing About Film" (BB) to try and articulate what is happening in these shots.
- *Think about the film through the critics from our course.* Derrida asks us to think about how our language is not fully our own. Hegel asks us to think about how we are formed by others. Butler asks us to think about we become who we are through repeated (and often compelled) actions that become "naturalized" after the fact. Foucault asks us to think about the ways that the "visibility" or "confession" of our sexuality both creates knowledge of that sexuality but also controls it. Are there moments in the film that make you think of these theories?

Some questions to bear in mind while viewing the film:

- What role does language play in identity formation (and dissolution) in this film? What role does confession play?
- Is speech or silence the more powerful force in the film?
- The film begins and ends with images of film cameras. In what ways might we see this movie as, in fact, a commentary on filmmaking? Is it significant that Elisabet was an actress?
- What role do sex and sexuality play in the film? How central is sexual desire to identity?
- What is the connection between identification and desire in the film?

- Pregnancy is a recurrent theme. Why do you think that it is so prominent? How is the identification of Alma and Elisabet different than or similar to the identification of a child with its parent?
- In the midst of the film the film briefly “breaks” (44:35)—we see, once again, cuts from the prologue and we become aware of the materiality of film itself. Why does this scene occur and why does it occur at this particular time?
- What is the importance of the letter that Elisabet writes to her husband?

Questions to prepare for our class meeting:

What is one connection you made between a moment in the film and one of the critics we’ve read in the course so far?

Choose one image from the film that interested you (it might be useful to pull up a scene from YouTube and actually pause it). Try to describe this image in as much detail as possible using the techniques described in “A Short Guide to Writing about Film.”

Who has more power in the film—Alma or Elisabet? Why?

2. Pre-Writing Worksheet for Essay 3

Compose the introductory paragraph to your paper. Make sure to (1) “hook” your reader, (2) explain *why* your argument matters (i.e., answer the “So what?” question), and (3) provide a substantive, “three-story” thesis:

Briefly (in one paragraph), describe as sympathetically as possible the *best* counterargument that could be made against your position:

Materials Related to Essay 4

1. Pre-Writing Worksheet for Essay 4

Please review the photocopied pages on “Definition” and “Assumptions” handed out in class [and posted on the course site under “Handouts”] before completing this worksheet.

Definitions:

Briefly define what you mean by “the self”:

How will you defend this definition?

Identify at least one other key term that you’ll be using in your essay:

Define this term:

Assumptions:

Identify at least one assumption that your essay will rest upon. Remember that the only assumptions you should make in your essay are ones that you can *safely assume* your reader will hold: